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RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU 9069
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 6029
RUESLE/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 8463
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 5043
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000773

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TAGS: PGOV TW

SUBJECT: KMT TRIES MIXED TACTICS TO INCREASE PRESSURE ON CHEN

Classified By: AIT Acting Director David J. Keegan,
Reason(s): 1.4 (B/D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Kuomintang (KMT) legislators intend to move forward with a recall motion against President Chen. KMT legislators told AIT that the recall will protest Chen putting his own selfish political interests ahead of the Taiwan people's desire for cross-Straight stability and economic development, endangering Taiwan's relations with the U.S. and China. They urged the U.S. to press Chen to admit the continued existence of the National Unification Council and National Unification Guidelines (NUC/NUG), saying they were unable to do so on their own. They warned that otherwise anti-American sentiment might rise. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The KMT has secured the support of one-fourth (55) of the Legislative Yuan and will go forward with its recall motion against President Chen. On March 7, AIT met with KMT Central Policy Committee Director and Legislator Tseng Yung-chuan, and three of the legislators leading the KMT recall movement against President Chen: KMT Legislative Yuan (LY) caucus whip Tina Pan (Wei-kang), Joanna Lei, and Yang Chiung-ying. Pan conceded the recall motion has little chance of passing, but insisted the KMT must pursue the recall to voice its anger at Chen for breaking his "five noes" promise and jeopardizing cross-Straight stability. Pan said the KMT also wanted to punish Chen for putting his selfish political interests ahead of the Taiwan people's desire for continued cross-Straight peace and improved economic conditions. KMT legislator Lei told AIT that Taiwan's existing governmental system enables President Chen to unilaterally change the course of Taiwan's future, and that aside from recall or impeachment motions, there is little the LY or other branches of government can do to restrain him. (Comment: Lei's remarks are dramatic but ignore the Taiwan government's system of checks and balances that almost all analysts, Blue and Green, insist make such constitutional steps toward independence impossible. End comment.)

¶3. (C) The KMT legislators asserted that President Chen has used clever wordplay to "fool" the U.S., succeeding in his effort to "abolish" the NUC and the NUG and to change the status quo. Tseng and Pan also claimed that most KMT legislators (and the majority of the Taiwanese public) suspect the U.S. has accepted Chen's decision to scrap the NUC/NUG to facilitate the passage of the U.S.-sponsored arms

procurement package. (Comment: The KMT logic escapes us, since the Chen Administration has always supported this package and since the opposition pan-Blue holds a majority of LY seats. End Comment.) According to Pan, most KMT LY members would be willing to defy Chairman Ma Ying-jeou and suspend further discussion of the arms procurement issue in order to express their displeasure. Pan warned that anti-American sentiment could grow among the KMT and its supporters if the U.S. does not act decisively to counter the public perception that it approved of Chen's NUC/NUG decision.

¶4. (C) Tseng, who said he had discussed the NUC/NUG issue with PRC Taiwan Affairs Office Director Chen Yunlin two weeks ago, told AIT that he found Beijing "very dissatisfied" with Washington's inability to get Chen to change course. The majority of KMT legislators, Tseng continued, feel the U.S. has not done enough to dissuade Chen from "abolishing" the NUC/NUG, and he urged the U.S. to demand that Chen state clearly "whether the NUC and NUC continue to exist." Tseng argued that U.S. "acquiescence" has encouraged Chen, whose next step will be to use the referendum process to push for a new constitution -- an outcome the KMT believes is certain to further antagonize the PRC. Pan said, "The U.S. must decide whether to side with President Chen, who favors independence, or the majority of the Taiwan people, who favor the status quo and peace."

Comment

¶5. (C) The KMT LY caucus has long been the focal point for the party's emotional reactions against President Chen and the DPP, and these reactions have escalated following Chen's recent announcement of his decision on the NUC's "ceasing to

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function" and the NUG's "ceasing to apply." The KMT is frustrated that it cannot turn the tables on Chen, and is trying to shift blame to the U.S. Some extremist KMT legislators seem willing to try anything -- raising specters of anti-American sentiment and dashing hopes for improving Taiwan's self-defense capability -- in hopes the U.S. will take a tougher line that would give the KMT the upper hand politically against Chen. More moderate LY members and KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou are clearly less enthusiastic on this issue. Though for the moment siding with the KMT recall movement, Ma has also called for political calm, a focus on pressing economic issues and cross-Strait stability, and an end to the year-and-a-half-long deadlock on defense procurement. Ma will want to show progress, perhaps especially on defense procurement, before his five-day visit to the U.S. beginning March 19.

KEEGAN